

## **Drought**

**By Jessica Lopez Lyman**

Papa washes the dishes.  
Nana watches  
this new phenomenon.

He clears my plate.  
A single french fry  
still remains.  
The crispy burnt edge  
stuck to a smudge of ketchup.

“Speak Spanish”  
He murmurs.  
Papa’s back turned to me  
bent over the sink.  
“We should be speaking in Spanish.”

When he says this  
I’m not sure  
if he is talking to me  
or himself.

We both should know better.

Nana sits  
between us  
silent.

No pocha lingers  
on her tongue.  
In Cuernavaca  
she can pass.

Not like Papa  
and for sure  
not like me.

His Spanish  
like buzz cuts  
smooth but  
always thumping.

Mine

like scissors  
mistakes cut mangled  
with stunted accents.

“Speak Spanish”  
Pricks the inner  
parts of myself.  
I keep quiet  
forgotten, silent.

We try  
for a little while  
he washes the cup.

“Como te fue la escuela?”  
“Bien...muy bien. Pero quiero un trabajo.”  
“Sí, pero en tiempo. Necesitas learn more”  
“Sí, papa, yeah, yo sé. You’re right.”

Then nothing  
but running water.  
Nana folds her napkin.  
A full meal still  
left on her plate.  
Papa washes my fork  
then his glass.

Only running water  
nothing else  
makes noise.

Our words  
in a drought.